Lonely Monsters

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Lonely Monsters

by TigerPrawn

Summary

Tristan is living a quiet life hiding among humans, and then Galahad happens.

Kind of a prequel to Beautiful Monsters
Now includes art from the wonderful Trashbambi - embedded in fic and also on twitter

Notes

This was originally going to be a Modern AU, but this historical period spoke to me, plus technically it is "modern" for Tristhad.

The first killing had been a deer.

The dogs had come upon it a moment before Tristan, letting out plaintive howls at the sight of it. They were well trained, so he knew they wouldn't have dared feast on the poor animal, but never before had he seen this reaction. They were hunting dogs, they would stand their pose, pointing him in the direction of that which needed his attention.

But with this kill, they worried and shook. Howled and looked eager to be gone from the scene.

When Tristan looked down at the deer, what had been a deer, he could understand their fear. The deer had been mauled by claws larger than any creature he'd seen in a while. He couldn't even imagine the bears and wolves that had once populated this wood, would have caused such carnage.

The cavity that had once held the heart, was empty. But otherwise there was little eaten. Just rendered apart. Shredded. Unskilled in its dissection.

Tristan had never seen anything like it. He'd had to take the dogs back to the kennels before he could dispose of the animal.

That evening when his lordship had asked, Tristan had told him there had been a poacher and that he would be mindful in watching for the blaggard's potential return.

The next killing, a month later, was rabbit. Not just one, several though it was hard to tell exactly, because they had been torn to pieces. Hearts gone, bodies ripped in half.

A curious thing.

Whatever was doing this had no real pattern or preference. Strange for man or beast.

Tristan kept watch for the creature, intent on capturing it before he lost this comfortable position he had carved out as groundskeeper for the manor house. It would not do if people became aware of some monster roaming the land.

It wouldn't do at all.

Tristan scented the air, a definite smell out there, but one so ingrained with the trees and dirt that it was hard to discern. He'd need a fresh trail.

*

It was three months more of occasional and graphic death, before Tristan found the fresh scent. It was along the river that ran through his lord's land, and as he followed it he expected the scent to cross the water and be lost to him.

But that was not the case.

And soon the dirt-tree scent was joined with a metallic flavour that Tristan could taste on the back of his tongue.

A fresh kill.

Tristan went slowly, downwind. Knowing that, in all likelihood, the monster he was tracking would smell him on the breeze.

The crunching of bones and the plaintive cry of the deer, told Tristan he was close.

And there it was.

Hidden in the dense trees with barely room to move, the beast tore into the chest of the deer and didn't stop until it pulled out the still beating heart. It held it for a moment in its clawed hand watching the life fade from it before it pressed it to its snout.

It made short work, one bite, one chew and then it swallowed, taking the essence the deer down into itself.

"Interesting," Tristan said, his voice a rumble cutting through the chirp and chatter of birds and insects.

The creature startled, looking directly at him with burning yellow eyes, snout covered in blood and thick black lips drawn back over its sharp and bloodied teeth.

A werewolf.

Tristan had never seen one with his own eyes, but the legends of the creature ran rampant in this part of the world, just as the legends of the antlered monsters in his own home country.

"Don't be afraid," Tristan's tone was laconic, just as many would describe him.

Even so, his words seemed to stop the wolf for a moment. It scented the air and snarled, ears flattening against its head before it turned and ran into the undergrowth.

*

Tristan saw nothing of the wolf for another couple of months, and wondered if it had moved on from the area, hopefully permanently.

He would regularly scent the air, on the lookout for it, or for another kill, but neither presented themselves.

Winter started to set in, and the snow began to fall. Covering the manor house, the grounds, and his own little cottage, in a thick blanket that obscured any scent he might have had a chance to encounter.

Or so Tristan thought.

Given that his lordship now hunted significantly less, preferring to stay near a warm fire, it became Tristan's duty to exercise his hounds.

It was a bright morning when he came upon the kennels and picked up the scent. It wasn't the dogs, nor the horses in the nearby stables. It was most certainly trees and dirt. A scent that belonged in the woods, but was here, near the manor house.

Perhaps, Tristan wondered, the next kill would be a servant.

He let out a huff, seeing his breath in the frozen air, and frowning at the thought. If a human was killed, then he could no longer hide this creature, and if it was exposed, it could mean his own exposure if the humans cared to look closer.

Tristan continued past the kennels and towards the manor house, seeing even from a short way off, that the door to the coal cellar was open.

And he could scent that too, the deep soot of the gritty, rich scent of coal.

The scents mixed together and Tristan knew the wolf hid there. There was no blood though, a scent he'd always known well, this time was remarkably absent.

But also welcomingly so. He was glad to know he wasn't about to find the beast feasting on a member of the household.

Even so, he moved cautiously, his way lit by the dim sun that was trying to break through heavy cloud cover. Which meant that the light disappeared as he took each step inside the coal cellar.

Attempting to be as quiet as possible, Tristan took the oil lamp from it's hanging place beside the door and lit it with matches from his pocket, lowering the wick so that it burned very low. Enough to see, but hopefully not enough to startle.

The wolf looked up as soon as he realised Tristan was there, and even with it's beastly features, Tristan could make out an expression of confusion and even a little fear. Understandably.

"I know you can understand me. You are safe with me as long as you have no ill intent here. You must leave this land." Tristan spoke quietly but firmly.

He would indeed let the wolf leave unscathed if it would go from this place and not return. Not continue to put Tristan's own presence there in danger.

The poor creature was likely just confused. Eating hearts was the sure sign of a newly turned monster. An instinct to devour, what they perceived to be, a living thing's life force. The most nourishing part as it adapted to a new life.

They looked at each other for a long moment before the wolf rose to its feet. It towered over Tristan a little, and despite this still looked terrified when it shook out its fur and then bolted past him and out into the grounds.

*

"Oh, I didn't know that you were… sorry…"

Tristan recognised the polite and quiet words of Lord Arthur's ward, Galahad. He was barely out of his teens, ten years younger than Tristan's thirty years. He had lived with the lord as long as Tristan had been there, but they had barely interacted. Tristan only knew the common knowledge - Galahad was the sweet and shy son of a soldier who died in battle. His lordship had been his brother at arms during the Napoleonic Wars and had sworn to take in the orphaned boy, raising him as his own.

Tristan was sure he could count on one hand the times they had even been in the same room over the four years he had been there.

And now Galahad stood, lamb-like, in the doorway to the kennels as the sun began to set behind him.

"I just… Cook had some of the brisket going to waste and I thought…" Galahad held out the paper wrapped meat that Tristan could smell too well.

The family had eaten the brisket two nights before. The servants allowed to pick over it the following day, but now it was only good for the dogs.

Tristan gave a curt nod and Galahad stepped forward, eyeing him warily. He hadn't realised quite how nervous the boy was, or perhaps it was his effect on him? Maybe he was just perceptive and sensed that there was something about Tristan to be afraid of.

"Do this often?" Tristan asked as he continued to fill the dogs water bowl from the pail he had brought with him a few minutes earlier.

Galahad shook his head, "Sometimes. Usually scraps when we go hunting in the warmer weather."

Tristan nodded and replied gruffly, "His lordship won't want them being turned into gluttons whilst the weather keeps him from hunting."

"I know." Galahad responded with a clear shiver at Tristan's tone. Something he might have found somewhat arousing if such an interest wouldn't cost him his livelihood, and perhaps more. The boy was beautiful and Tristan liked the shy ones.

Tristan continued in silence, preparing the dogs for bedding down, as Galahad dished out the scraps of brisket to them, muttering softly to each dog in turn.

He had never had much chance to study the boy before, so he did that now. There was something otherworldly about Galahad that Tristan couldn’t quite put his finger on. Perhaps the ethereal eyes, or his impish countenance.

Tristan was sure that it was a face such as Galahad’s that people pictured when writing stories of fairies and sirens.

When Galahad finished feeding and petting the dogs, he turned to Tristan, realising the man was still there. Tristan huffed, sure the little lord was used to the staff just coming and going unseen.

Though, there seemed more to it than that. Galahad seemed genuinely unsettled by him, he was sure. Something beyond what Tristan had initially considered to be shyness.

Galahad took in a shaky breath and started towards Tristan, clearly intending to walk around him and out the door. This timid thing would be nothing more than a snack for any number of beasts, human or monster.

"It's a full moon tomorrow,” Tristan warned, as Galahad passed him. “Be sure to take a care. You never know what manner of monster you might encounter." thinking that he could be the next heart the wolf might take.

Galahad looked a little stricken by his words but gave a sharp nod before hurrying back out of the kennels and towards the manor house.

*

Tristan heard the howl.

He should have been sleeping, but he needed to know if the wolf was still in the area. There was only so much time before it killed in a way that Tristan would be unable to hide, in a way that might expose more than itself.

And so he had stayed awake as the full moon rose over the house, grounds and woods of his lordship's estate. Sat on the small porch of his cottage, waiting for a sign of the monster.

When the howl came again it was weaker, but in the same location. Easy for Tristan to hone in on and stalk towards, prepared this time for what might come.

Prepared to call on his own inner monster, should the need arise.

When Tristan found the wolf it was once more eating the hearts of a brace of rabbits. Tristan realised that the howl was one of frustration, its quarry too small and the wolf suffered from it.

"Your instincts are telling you to just eat the hearts, to consume their life force. But you need the meat too or you will perish." Tristan spoke softly as he approached.

The wolf startled, turning a growl on Tristan as he came to crouch a few feet away. It's ears back and fear in its eyes.

"No one is teaching you how to be what you are," Tristan realised aloud. He almost felt sorry for the thing but, "I know it's difficult, but I can't allow you to keep hunting here. Sire or no to guide you, if I see you in these lands again, I will kill you."

Tristan's words were soft and the wolf's ears went back all the more, flat to its head.

The fear was still there, enough for the wolf to do something stupid, and Tristan sorely hoped it wouldn't. He didn't want to have to kill a monster.

It lunged.

Tristan had been prepared and so rose to meet it. Instead of being knocked off his feet, he stopped the wolf still. His hands going deep into the wolf's fur and taking hold of its throat.

His fingers extended into talons as he gripped, the wolf whimpering and eyes going wide as claws dug in.

"I can rip your throat out, or you can go from this place." Tristan spoke calmly. Laconic as usual, he knew he had the upper hand here.

The wolf struggled for a moment and then stopped, realising it was not going to free itself from Tristan unless Tristan allowed it.

When he stilled completely, Tristan let the wolf go. Setting it down.

"Will you go?" Tristan asked.

The wolf didn't hesitate in turning tail and running at speed, away from Tristan.

The wood was large enough that it might take the wolf the evening to find the edge of it and leave, so Tristan followed at a slow pace to ensure the wolf had indeed done as instructed.

He had not expected, less than a half hour later, to catch up on the fresh scent of the wolf, and then the wolf itself. It lay at the bottom of the small ravine, a slightly twisted look to its body. Tongue lolling where it lay unconscious.

Tristan let out a deep sigh and shook his head. This pup was more trouble than it was worth.

*

Carrying the wolf up the ravine and to his cottage had not been difficult

Its breathing was laboured but not shallow. Likely knocked out by the fall. Its hind leg was twisted in a way that would be painful to heal from, especially at the speed it would heal.

Tristan dumped the wolf, unceremoniously, on his bed, before moving to the leg and snapping it back into place. The wolf growled and whimpered at that but did not wake.

Not wanting to take any chances now, Tristan belted the wolf to the frame of the bed. He would keep it there until it was well to leave and then ensure that it left the grounds for good.

Tristan locked his bedroom door behind him as he made his way out of the cottage, into the dawning light. It was time for him to get to work.

The dogs were first, the weather was still cold, it felt like snow was lingering in the clouds ready to fall. But as Tristan drew closer to the kennels, it was impossible not to see the commotion happening up at the house and stables.

Horses were being brought out, and even his lordship stood overseeing the scene from the big doors of the house. Something out of the ordinary was happening.

"Tristan," Called one of the stablehands, "Can you bring Bessie, she's a good tracker."

Tristan gave a sharp nod before responding, "What's happened?" The last time he'd seen anything like this was not long after he had taken up the job as groundskeeper and the local constabulary asked for assistance in hunting down an escaped convict. Back then all the commotion at first had worried Tristan that they were onto him, something he felt some fear of now.

"His lordship's ward is missing. Hasn't been seen since late afternoon yesterday. He went to bed without supper, but when the maid went to check on him this morning, the bed wasn't slept in. He's been kidnapped."

Or worse. Tristan thought, wondering if the boy was lying dead in the woods with his heart eaten out.

He went to fetch the dog and considered it, could the wolf have killed the boy in those woods without Tristan knowing? He would have scented a dead human for sure. And the wolf had been hungry…

A cold chill ran over Tristan as he took the dog out, leashing her next to the stable as the people gathered to ride out.

"I will start searching the woods," Tristan told them, to responding nods. He knew the woods better than anyone so this thankfully made sense to them.

Tristan turned and tried to seem unhurried as he strode back to his cottage.

As expected, when Tristan returned, the slightly pained whimpers from within the room were now clearly human.

What he hadn't expected, was to recognise the pitch and tone.

Tristan took a breath and unlocked the door, opening it to see the naked boy struggling against the belt around his throat that had tightened as he did so. On hearing Tristan come in, he stopped, lying on the bed and watching with fear and defiance as he lay full exposed.

"Oh pup, what's to be done about this?" Tristan growled.

*

Tristan left it a few hours before trying to check the boy's leg again.

It had already been looking better than when he had still been in wolf form, but it had been hard to tell completely as Galahad had pulled away from him, terrified. He stopped just short of having hysterics, and Tristan had been tempted just to let him exhaust himself and pass out. But he really didn't want to risk him screaming and shouting, and that sound potentially carrying to a search party.

A search party for this boy. Who was apparently the werewolf that had been troubling him for months.

Not so easy to send away, Tristan realised. And it would explain why, despite being scared of Tristan, the wolf hadn't been run off.

Tristan waited until the boy had passed out from the pain and exertion of his quick healing, and then came back into the room and took a look at his leg. In a couple more hours it would be healed, only the fresh, pink skin would give away the injury to those who cared to look hard enough.

A couple more hours and he could find the boy some clothes and happen to find him in the woods, or sneak him back up to the house. Their mutual futures in this place would need to be discussed, but with a search party out looking for the little lord, now was not the time.

Tristan sensed the boy waking a moment before he recoiled from Tristan's fingers on his leg.

Galahad, no longer belted, moved up the bed, trying to get away whilst pulling blankets up around him to protect his modesty.

"You don't need to be afraid of me," Tristan told him in a low rumble. For now, that was the truth.

"What… What are you?" The words started cautious but then became demanding, a lord ordering his servant.

Tristan huffed a chuckle at the attitude.

"A monster."

Galahad considered this for a long minute, the silence stretched between them. He bit his lip when he finally looked to Tristan and asked, solemn and sad, “Are we the same?”

Tristan shook his head. "No, identically different. Both monsters, but not entirely the same. My people are from Sarmatia, but I know of legends all across Eastern Europe that reflect my own. We were one people once. Your kind are wolves. Mine… it doesn't matter for now."

Tristan explained, not wanting to scare Galahad now that he seemed to be easing a little. Galahad nodded, and Tristan hoped he’d explained well enough. Perhaps Galahad understood instinctively, as he had himself as a child. What with them both having been born the monsters they were, and not turned as some were. Or at least that was the assumption he made.

"Were you bitten? By a wolf?" Tristan asked.

Galahad shook his head.

Tristan nodded. "Your parents, or one at least, they must have been the same as you."

"They're dead," Galahad spat the words.

"I know," Tristan rested his hand on Galahad's uninjured leg, and this time the boy didn't flinch.

"I woke up one night and I was in the woods. I was… eating…" Galahad didn't look appalled at the memory, which was at least something.

"You have no sire to teach you, to guide you on how to be what you are. So far you have been driven by instinct. Your instincts told you to fear me because you could sense what I am. They have served you well, but they aren't everything." Tristan explained.

"Will you teach me? If you're a monster too then…" Galahad trailed off and eyed him expectantly.

"I'm not going to be your father," Tristan laughed, trying to dismiss the idea.

"No… I don't want that." Galahad replied quickly, and Tristan felt the spike of his scent and thump of his blood.

Oh.

Tristan removed his hand from Galahad's leg and for a moment thought the boy would whine. Perhaps he was merely gravitating to a fellow monster? Tristan wasn't sure that it mattered either way.

"We need to get you back to the house as soon as you're healed. I suggest you explain that you went for a walk before bed and became lost, I have just found you in the woods. You might be scalded, but it is a lie that will keep us both safe." Tristan said the words firmly, hoping to impress that he wouldn't accept being put in danger by an inexperienced little pup.

*

Everyone was too relieved with Galahad's safe return to question it in any detail, and the boy promised not to wander off again, especially in the dark of night.

It had been the next day that Lord Arthur had called Tristan into his study to discuss the incident. Or more accurately, to thank Tristan for his part in Galahad's safe return, and to beseech him to spend some time with the boy. If Galahad ever wanted to go out into the woods to explore, Tristan should go with him.

Tristan agreed with no more than a nod, getting a strong sense from the entire meeting that no one in the household, other than himself, had a suspicion of what Galahad truly was.

His lordship, as it turned out, really needn't have bothered with this request. Almost daily, or at least every day that Galahad didn't have prior engagements, the boy turned up at his cottage or found him in the woods, the kennels or about his other duties.

Galahad even helped, without having been asked. And he was strong, which of course Tristan had expected of him being a wolf. And that had been a help when he was mending the fence along the southern edge of the property, or felling trees.

Much like himself, Galahad also wasn't terribly bothered by the colder weather, even when it started to snow heavily the following week, so that didn't put the boy off either.

And, in truth, Tristan wasn't sure he wanted to discourage him.

He tried to convince himself that his interest was in ensuring his own safety, first and foremost, by making sure Galahad didn't cause trouble with his full moon shifts. And, as a secondary concern to that, he had to accept the responsibility he seemed to have been stuck with, to teach the boy about being a monster so that he could keep himself safe in the future too.

All self-serving, Tristan tried to convince himself.

He wanted to ignore the niggling thoughts at the back of his mind, that there was more to it than that. That there was a part of him that wanted to welcome the company of a fellow monster. It had been many years since he'd had such a companion. Not since he left his homeland. The temptation to get to know Galahad better was there, and hard to ignore.

So hard not to talk casually with the boy. Or at least listen. He certainly was more animated where Tristan was stoic. Though Tristan wasn't unaware of how much Galahad managed to get from him. As easy a conversation as he'd ever had, on all matters. From the correct way to stack firewood to Tristan's experiences growing up with his own kind.

Before Tristan realised three weeks had passed, and it was as if he had always known Galahad. Three weeks of getting to know one another as they laboured in the snow. Tristan wasn't unaware of the talk of the stablehands, that the little lord was learning to be a groundskeeper. Or a groundskeeper's wife.

He couldn't deny that Galahad's fear had been replaced with quite the opposite. Nor could he deny his response to the interest. On the surface he merely tolerated Galahad, but truthfully, he enjoyed the boy's company. And the scent of his arousal when they ended up stood close to each other to carry out a task, flared his own.

It got to be that he was half hard almost every time he was around the boy.

It was the first evening in a week that it hadn't snowed, and Tristan took the chance to walk the woods as he often had in the evenings, when Galahad appeared next to him.

"Hello," Galahad said, almost coy, and there was a flush on his cheeks. The scent of his arousal was rich and warm and made Tristan's nostril flare. "I wanted to… Can I walk with you?"

Tristan grunted and gave a curt nod of agreement, before resuming his walk, Galahad falling into step beside him.

"You tracked me?" Tristan asked, knowing there was no other way the boy would have found him.

Galahad nodded, "Yes. I… went to the cottage and when you weren't there I followed your footprints. But they got lost in the foliage, so I scented you. I... followed your scent."

Tristan knew that if he turned to look at the boy, his blush would be all the darker.

"That's an awful lot of trouble to go to," Tristan replied gruffly, even though he really wanted to praise the boy for starting to embrace his wolf side in his human form. He would have better control when shifted if he could manage that.

Galahad was quiet for a moment as they continued to walk, before resting his hand gently on Tristan's arm to halt him. They both stopped, the still air around them filled with the steam from their breath.

"I can feel the full moon getting close, like it's itching under my skin. I hadn't noticed it before but now I'm paying attention. To that and… other things too." Galahad didn't look him in the eyes as he spoke but instead looked around them until finally looking down at his feet.

"And that's why you came to find me?" Tristan asked, not directly wanting to ask what the other things were, and not entirely sure he wanted to know.

Galahad nodded. "I'm feeling… I feel…"

Arousal was coming off him in waves and Tristan could practically feel the heat radiating from him.

Tristan cleared his throat but was unable to step back and distance himself, as he really felt he should.

"I can't imagine his lordship would be so keen on you spending time with me if he thought you had a carnal interest."

Tristan had to admit he enjoyed the way Galahad blushed at his brazen comment, even if he did think for a moment that Galahad might run. He wasn't sure what he wanted, he just knew he didn't want Galahad to run, so he placed his hand over the boy's.

Galahad's reaction was unexpected. He shuddered and then threw himself into Tristan's arms, pressing their lips together.

When Tristan tried to open his mouth to speak, Galahad just deepened the kiss, slipping his tongue into Tristan's mouth.

He kept his arms down, despite desperately wanting to wrap them around the boy. And he didn't resist immediately, kissing back for just a moment before he broke away, panting.

"Galahad, I can't. We can't." Tristan said firmly, forcing the words out despite knowing that his cock was rapidly thickening against Galahad's hip. Galahad whimpered and tried to grind against him, but Tristan took his arms then and moved them a pace apart from each other.

He let out a heavy sigh, looking down at the ground between them for a moment before looking back to Galahad.

"What I have here is safe and comfortable. I haven't had that in many years. I can't do anything to compromise that. Neither can you, whether in human form or wolf. I don't want to-"

"You don't want to be lonely." Galahad spat angrily. "Don't you think I realise that? Don't you think I hear it in your stories. You like being here, with people. You could live anywhere and be a monster but you'd be alone. I'm lonely too, don't you see that? Surrounded by people who will never understand me, or accept you. This way you get the best of both worlds. I could be a part of that. I could-"

"Galahad." Tristan spoke firmly, frowning and clenching his jaw. "No. No you can't. Do you think they will let us be together? I don't want a life for you where you sneak around and fuck the staff. Where being caught once will end everything for both of us. I won't do that to either of us."

Tristan released his hold on the boy and turned away, bracing for Galahad to say more. But he didn't. Tristan turned back to see Galahad running back towards the manor house, and away from him once again.

*

The full moon drew closer by the day, but Galahad stayed in the house.

If they were still talking, he would have used the time to prepare the boy. To try to help him manage his shift and not to cause the fuss he had before. To be a monster in secret as Tristan had learned to be.

He couldn't help his mind stirring with the idea of what it would be like for them to be together, as impossible as that was. They were just as likely to be strung up as sodomites than as monsters.

Tristan knew he shouldn't let himself dwell upon it, but he couldn't help picturing what a life they might have. In the wilderness somewhere, far from everyone. No chance to be lonely because they'd have each other. And with time Galahad would learn to control himself, learn how to shift outside of the full moon and they could spend time in those natural forms together. Fanciful thoughts that were all the more pointless now that Galahad refused to even speak with him.

When the full moon arrived, Tristan prepared for the worst.

If Galahad decided to remain indoors, it might mean carnage. What would the wolf do if a human startled him? With Tristan he had realised the danger and had the good sense to be scared. He wouldn't feel the same way about any humans disrupting his shift.

Hence, Tristan was relieved when he sensed the wolf wandering the woods as the moon began to rise.

He didn't go to him immediately, realising there was only one way and one chance to do this. To give Galahad what the boy wanted. What he wanted to, though he had been too scared of changing his life to acquiesce.

Tristan took a deep breath as he stood naked outside the cottage, knowing this might be - likely would be - the end of his life here.

He relaxed into the change, welcoming the familiar pain of his antlers sprouting through flesh. His entire skin stretching, hardening, darkening. Becoming his true pitch black form as he grew and stretched. The pain was exquisite. A pain he'd denied himself more than he should, for fear of his discovery. He had been lonely and he had imprisoned himself within human flesh.

The thought made him shudder, and swaths of human hair and skin fell from him, turning to ash before they hit the ground.

He breathed deep, the air smelling all the richer in this form. He could scent everything. He knew where all the humans were, all the animals in the grounds and woods. And Galahad.

He knew exactly where his wolf was.

Tristan strode from the cottage into the undergrowth, his antlers catching the occasional branch that he had no time to stop for. So he continued, some branches wiping back, other dragged from the trees and falling in his wake.

His hoofs beat hard on the cold ground, and his cock began to thicken and hang heavy between his legs.

The monster within had but one goal this night. To find his mate.

*

The wolf was on the other side of the woods. Avoiding Tristan, no doubt. But Tristan was determined, if Galahad would still have him, then he would let the wolf have him.

Galahad sensed him a moment before he sniffed the air and then rounded on him, his hackles up and teeth bared. He was stood on his hind legs, of a height to Tristan, and he wasn't afraid anymore. Perhaps even less so, now having seen Tristan in his true form. No more pretence between them - they were equal now as monsters. No longer experienced man and young boy, no longer nobility and groundsman.

Tristan chuckled when he noticed Galahad shudder, his fur shaking as the wolf was clearly overcome by the scent of Tristan's arousal.

"I was wrong." Tristan rumbled the words, his voice different but all the more real in this form.

Galahad's ears perked forward at the words and his demeanour changed. He settled, cocking his head slightly, clearly waiting for what Tristan would say or do next.

Tristan stepped forward, reaching out his long fingers and pressing talons through the scruff at Galahad's neck.

"Little wolf," Tristan said, unable to hide the adoration in his tone as he stroked a hand through Galahad's fur. "Pup."

At the word Galahad let out a low, brief snarl, drawing a chuckle from Tristan.

"Do you know how wolves mate, Galahad?" Tristan asked, his cock now painfully hard at the thought.

Galahad chuffed, and Tristan was sure in human form he'd be blushing now.

Clawed paw reached for him, and Tristan shuddered as Galahad's pads moved rough over his shoulder. The wolf stepped in closer, until they were pressing together and Tristan could feel the Galahad's cock emerging wet and hard from its sheath.

Tristan reached between them to touch it, bringing their very different and equally monstrous cocks together to stroke.

Galahad let out a whimper and shuddered, his fur standing on end.

"Do you want this? Do you… still want me?" Tristan asked.

Galahad replied by licking his wide, flat tongue over Tristan's lips, until Tristan parted them and allowed Galahad to lick inside his mouth as he whimpered, rut, and wagged his tail.

Before Tristan even realised, their bodies were entwined, his hand unable to move between them as they pressed tight to each other. Galahad's large, furred arms were around him as he tried to get his tongue as far down Tristan's throat as possible, whilst Tristan moaned and writhed.

Galahad drew back suddenly, stepping away and cocking his head again, licking his tongue up over his nose as though he had tasted something strange. And of course he had, he must have pressed against Tristan's saliva glands. He could feel it now, the slow release of slick that would ease the way of any creature he wanted to mount.

Tristan shuddered and growled, turning and lowering himself to his knees and then to the ground, ass high.

"As wolves do," Tristan encouraged.

Galahad let out a chuff, a whine, the start of a low howl, as though unsure how to react. And then Tristan heard the rustling behind him of Galahad's movements, before feeling the hot, wet and rough sensation of the boy's tongue on his hole.

Tristan moaned and sank his talons into the hard ground, holding on for dear life as he felt like his spirit might leave his body. Galahad's tongue lathed over him, from cock and balls up to hole. And then he tried to press in, but Tristan was tight from the anticipation. He tried to relax but only the tip of Galahad's tongue could wriggle inside him, making him tighten all the more each time as his body clutched hungrily around the intrusion.

Galahad drew back and began lapping at the base of his spine, as though apologising for not being able to do as Tristan clearly desired.

Tristan growled and looked over his shoulder, licking his lips before stretching out his tongue.

Galahad watched and moved back, as Tristan trailed his extending tongue down his back, reaching as far as he could. And it was far enough. He was able to press three inches inside himself. Enough for his saliva to take effect, too loosen him and slick him.

His cock was throbbing, not at the self pleasure, but at the thought of what was to come. At the thought of being mounted by his mate.

Galahad whined with need as Tristan's tongue retreated, leaving him gaping and ready.

The whine turned to a growl and Galahad surged forward, his furred body pressing over Tristan. He could feel the boy's leaking cock across his back, precome marking him until Galahad pulled back enough to shift his hips.

Whining and practically dancing with his back legs, Galahad gripped his arms around Tristan's hips.

And then he speared inside Tristan with one long thrust that had Tristan moaning and drew a howl from Galahad.

"Make me yours," Tristan panted, the words barely understandable.

But Galahad clearly understood the intent. He gripped tight hold of Tristan and set a hard and rough pace, fucking him deep. Rocking inside him and barely pulling back. Tristan could already feel the wolf's knot swelling and pressing against him. This was going to be over quickly, and Tristan didn't care.

He was filled with pleasure and yet that hardly mattered. As the knot pushed into him and swelled all the more each time against his prostate, he savoured it. But the pleasure was incidental.

"Make me yours," Tristan growled the words, louder this time, less monstrous as he tried to retain enough humanity to make himself clear.

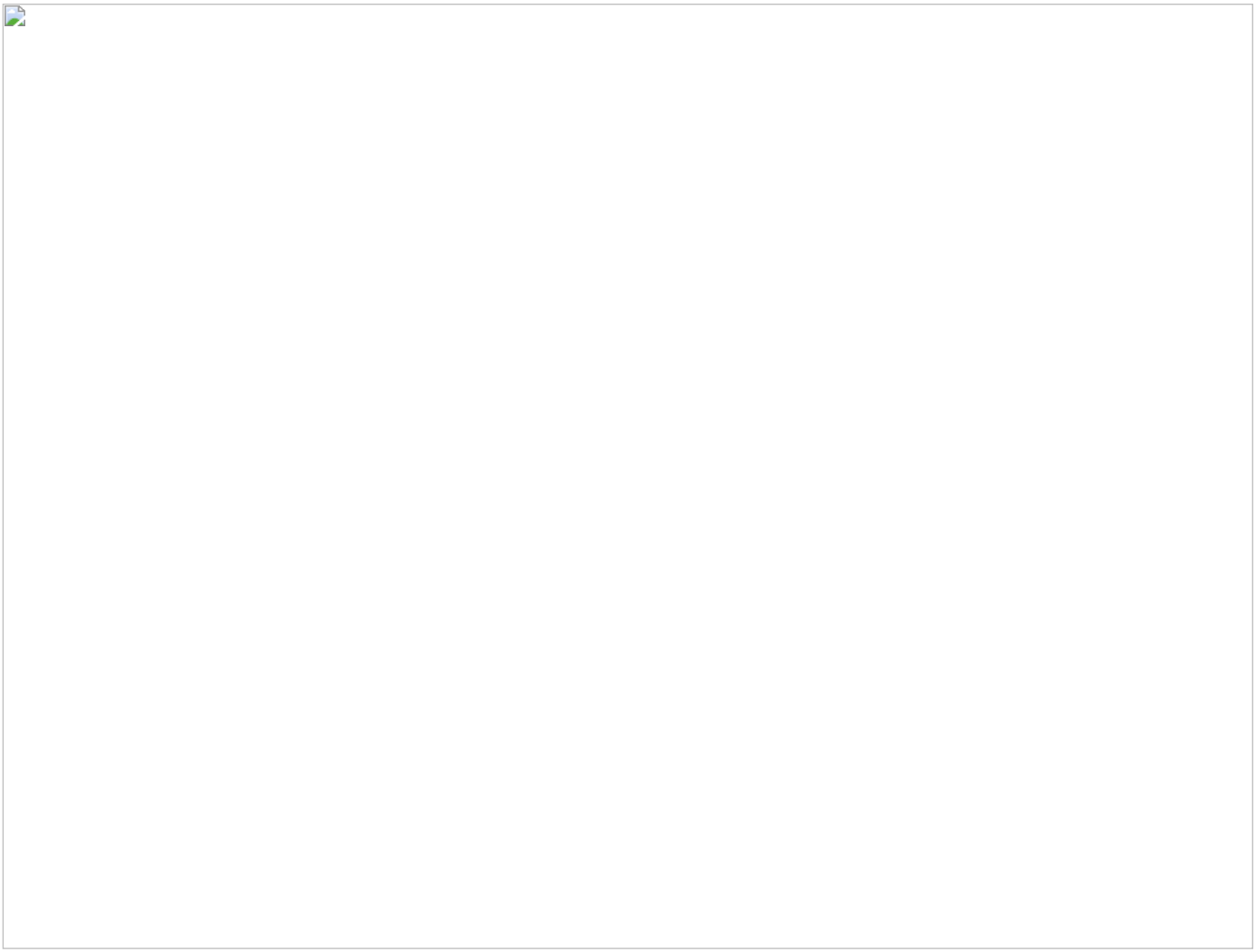
Galahad growled back in response, fucked him hard and faster, jack hammering into him though barely pulling out his knot until he wasn't able to at all. Until they were tied.

Tristan cried out at the sensation, coming copiously against the cold ground, as Galahad continued to pound into him as much as he could.

The wolf was whining and gripping hold of him so tight that had Tristan been in human form, it would have ripped his flesh to shreds.

And then Galahad was spilling inside him and Tristan convulsed through another climax. His mate marked him on the inside, and then latched his teeth into his neck. Sinking teeth into the thick and leathery skin until they broke through with an audible pop. Black blood flowed out, covering Tristan's skin and filling Galahad's mouth as they both groaned and shook.

Galahad continued to fill Tristan until his belly ached, stretching to accommodate his mate's seed. Finally he collapsed to the ground, blanketed by Galahad's soft fur, as their joining went on and on.



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When Tristan woke he could feel the hot press of flesh against his. Human now, both of them. Though the heat between them warded off the cold of the light snow that had fallen around them.

Tristan breathed deep, taking in Galahad's scent. The scent that was all over him and inside him, thoroughly claimed and no regrets about it.

"What the…"

The voice startled them both and Tristan looked up to see the man stood in the trees nearby. At first he feared the man was the first of a search party sent looking for Galahad once more. But the sun was only just rising and no one would have noticed the boy missing yet.

Tristan's eyes flashed to the brace of rabbits in the man's clutches.

A poacher. One that had now seen himself and the young lord naked and lying together. He might as well have seen them fucking.

The possibilities ahead spilled out before him. The man blackmailing his lordship, Galahad sent away, Tristan dismissed. Perhaps worse. Perhaps very much worse.

He felt Galahad shaking at his back, fear and anger both as he made the same realisations.

Tristan launched himself from the ground and towards the man, who turned and ran, but Tristan was upon him. He pushed the poacher to the ground and snapped his neck before he hit the floor, letting out a triumphant and satisfied growl at the same time.

Tristan was panting and shaking as he turned back to see Galahad, stood naked watching him.

"We must go," Tristan growled the words and Galahad scrambled towards him, looking down at the dead man with wide eyes.

"Did you… You enjoyed that." Galahad looked between the body and Tristan. And for a moment Tristan worried that this would change something between them. Galahad was not the monster that he was and suddenly that seemed readily apparent.

“I don't kill for pleasure.” Galahad told him, panting.

Tristan chuckled, not knowing how else to respond, “You should try it someday. You might get a taste for it.”

They looked at each other for a long moment before Galahad’s mouth twitched into a smile, and he swallowed, “Perhaps someday.”

Tristan let out the breath he hadn’t realised he’d been holding and nodded.

It was a short walk to the cottage then. It would take a short time to dress and pack anything they might need.

A short time until they were gone from the loneliness of this place.

It felt like such a short and uncomplicated time before they found a new home, in the wilderness. Together.

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